

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-7, 16-18, 20-23, 31, 34-36 and 38-40 are pending in the present application. Claims 4, 19, 32-33, and 37 were canceled. Claims 1, 2, 16, 23, 31 and 34 were amended. Reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

I. Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that Claims 4, 19, 33 and 37 respectively contain allowable subject matter. Applicants, through their attorney, express appreciation to the Examiner for this action.

In view of this action of the Examiner, Applicants have amended independent Claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claim 4, which has now been canceled. Accordingly, Claim 1, as well as Claims 2-3 and 5-7 respectively depending therefrom, are now considered to patentably distinguish over the art and to be in condition for allowance.

In like manner, independent Claims 16, 31 and 34 have been amended, to incorporate the allowable subject matter of Claims 19, 33 and 37, respectively. Accordingly, each of these claims, as well as Claims 17-18 and 20-23 respectively depending from Claim 16 and Claims 35-36 and 38-40 respectively depending from Claim 34, are also now considered to patentably distinguish over the art and to be in condition for allowance.

II. 35 U.S.C. § 102, Anticipation

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-3, 16-18, 21, 34-35 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,742,782, to Ito. Applicants respectfully consider this rejection to be overcome by the amendments to the claims made herein.

III. 35 U.S.C. § 103, Obviousness

The Examiner rejected Claims 5-7, 19-20, 22-23 and 38-40 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Ito, in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,555,432 to Hinton. Applicants respectfully consider these rejections to be overcome by the amendments to the claims made herein.

IV. Conclusion

It is respectfully urged that the subject application is patentable over the Ito and Hinton references, and over any combination thereof, and is now in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if in the opinion of the Examiner such a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

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Respectfully submitted,

/James O. Skarsten/

James O. Skarsten
Reg. No. 28,346
Yee & Associates, P.C.
P.O. Box 802333
Dallas, TX 75380
(972) 385-8777
Attorney for Applicants